2: Lorimer L-3 (1920-24) 1929 AV3 Dard AV3



The matter I have to present came to me largely fortuitously. My own interests lay in matters linguistic, and my immediate object was to obtain knowledge and specimens of the local languages. These languages are, of course, unwritten.

My principal method in such cases has been to get the people to tell me current popular tales and legends, and to give me accounts of local customs and beliefs, and to write them down to their dictation.

The content of my language material may therefore present subject of interest to folklorists, but it has not been collected with the critical knowledge or care of an expert folklorist.

Material thus casually collected is bound to present contradictions, ambiguities, and possibly misunderstandings, when it is not set in the firm frame of a story.

In regard to the terrain with which we are concerned, it is enough to recall that it is situated in the extreme north of India, to the north-west of Kashmir, in one of the loftiest mountain tracts of the world: the meeting point of the Hindu Kush and Karakoram ranges, where peaks and even ranges of 20,000 feet are a commonplace. The physical features are such as to favour isolation, a condition difficult of attainment in a continental country. Access for foreign influences must always have been difficult and restricted.

Even in recent times with the advent of the Pax Britannica, the partial establishment of foreign administration, and the construction of traversable roads, there has been no overwhelming inflow of exogenous influences, only a gradual infiltration. Thus old-standing beliefs and customs have not been subjected to any violent assault by modern disintegrating forces.

Isolation, however, is never more than relative.

In the case of Gilgit, at some unknown time, probably not more than 500 or 600 years ago, Islam gained admittance and sooner or later became the sole recognized religion in the region. Islam is a whole cultural system in itself,